

6th July 2022

Pilot

“Oh pilot, ‘tis a fearful night! There’s danger on the deep.”

Thomas Haynes Bayly, *The Pilot*

Some months ago, I offered reflections on the words and purpose of Psalm 23, “The Lord is my Shepherd”. As well as the original version from the Book of Psalms (from the King James’ Bible version I learned as a child, for example) there are any number of alternatives, from the familiar metrical form of *The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want*, to modern versions for particular circumstances and locations. There’s ample evidence, therefore, of the enduring nature of what this psalm communicates.

Recently, a friend sent me a version of Psalm 23 I hadn’t come across before, called “The Pilot Psalm”. I discovered that this version is all over the internet and is particularly associated with funerals and memorials for sailors and others involved with maritime activities. It’s thought to have originated from “The Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen” (*The Fishermen’s Mission*, see <https://www.fishermensmission.org.uk>).

Living in a fishing community, the words had an immediate resonance with me. But the metaphors they offer go far beyond images of the sea and its surroundings. For here, surely, is a prayer that can speak powerfully to every facet and of our lives – for landlubbers like me, as well as sailors. So I offer it to you here for your guidance, reassurance and encouragement – “The Pilot Psalm”.

*The Lord is my Pilot; I shall not drift.
He lighteth me across the dark waters.
He steereth me in deep channels.*

He keepeth my log:

*He guideth me by the star of holiness for his name’s sake
Yea, though I sail mid the thunders and the tempest of life,
I will dread no danger, for Thou art with me;
Thy love and Thy care they shelter me.*

*Thou preparest a harbour before me in the homeland of eternity;
Thou anointest the waves with oil; my ship rideth calmly.
Surely sunlight and starlight shall favour me on the voyage I take;
And I will rest in the port of my Lord for ever.*

A prayer for today

“Do you need a pilot?” Yes, I do. “Do you want a pilot?” Yes please.

“Will you trust the pilot?” Of course, I will. Amen.